



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 150

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 2004

No. 76

Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Rev. Steven D. Rice, First Lutheran Church, Miles City, MT.

PRAYER

The guest chaplain offered the following prayer:

In quiet moments of this Senate Chamber, the footfalls and voices of patriots past can still be heard, O God.

This forum of liberty set upon a hill cannot be hid.

Grant that the clamor of today's business not drown out distant and hallowed echoes of our heritage. Rather, grant the wisdom of the ages be present in the work of this day, that the divine genius of liberty might continue to enlighten the path of these United States.

During times of conflict and crisis, give our Senators wisdom and courage; during hours of solitude, grant them serenity and peace.

So it is, upon the work of this day, upon our heritage of freedom, upon this Senate now in session, we invoke Your name, O Lord God.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, we will have a 60-minute period of morn-

ing business, with the first half under the control of the majority and second half under the control of the minority.

Following that hour for statements, we will resume consideration of the Defense authorization bill. Under the order, we will vote on the pending amendments offered by Senators CRAPO and GRAHAM. Those amendments should be adopted by voice vote and will not require rollcalls.

Senator CANTWELL will then offer her alternative on nuclear waste, and there will be up to 4 hours for debate relative to that amendment. I hope we do not need all of that time and that some may be yielded back.

When debate is completed on the Cantwell amendment, we will proceed with four consecutive votes, first in relation to the nuclear waste amendment, to be followed by votes on the confirmation of three district judge nominations. Following those votes, we will continue consideration of the amendments to the Defense authorization bill.

There are a number of important scheduling commitments late this afternoon on both sides of the aisle. We will determine the voting schedule for the remainder of the day as we get closer to the scheduled vote series. Although we will not be voting in the evening, I expect we can continue our work and Members will remain available for other Defense amendments on the list.

Again, I will have more to say about the schedule this afternoon, as well as the schedule for tomorrow and Monday.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments and comment on our economy. It was just over a year ago that the Senate passed and the President signed into law \$350 billion in tax relief. That was the third largest tax cut in history. By so doing, we

brought the tax burden to the lowest level in 37 years. We cut taxes across the board for 136 million hard-working, taxpaying Americans. For America's families, we increased the child tax credit from \$600 to \$1,000 per child, and we made those rebate checks available immediately, and they were sent out immediately.

Combined with tax cuts of 2001, which were signed into law almost 3 years ago today, this year 111 million individuals and families will receive an average tax cut of over \$1,500.

If you are married, you are 1 of 49 million married couples who will have an average tax cut of \$2,600. For those families with children, you are 1 of the 43 million families with children who will receive an average tax cut of \$2,000.

We have 14 million elderly individuals who will see their taxes go down on average by nearly \$1,900. That is \$1,900 more that senior will be able to have to spend, to invest, or to use however they want.

If you are a small business owner, you are 1 of 25 million small business owners who will receive an average tax cut of \$3,000. In my home State of Tennessee, more than 2 million Tennesseans will have lower tax rates this year.

President Bush's tax cuts are working. Not only are the tax relief packages, the tax cuts putting more money back in workers' pockets, they are boosting the economy, and we are seeing the results today. Since we passed the tax cuts last year, over 1 million new jobs have been created. The unemployment rate has fallen to 5.6 percent, lower than the average unemployment rates for the past three decades. The number of working Americans has reached an all-time high. In particular, manufacturing employment has done especially well. It is at the highest level in almost 20 years.

Real gross domestic product grew at its fastest pace in more than 20 years.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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